

From: Clinton Bauder [mailto:gecko1@metridium.com]
Sent: Monday, March 06, 2006 4:19 PM
To: MLPAComments@resources.ca.gov
Subject: MLPAComments:

Sirs,

I am an active scuba diver and underwater filmmaker. I have been following with some interest the various MLPA implementation packages. I'm writing this letter today to offer my support for Package 2, which I believe offers the greatest protection of a variety of marine habitats. I average something like 150 hours a year underwater in the Monterey, Carmel and Big Sur areas. One of the things I'm struck by is the wide variety of habitats in this area, and the relatively small size of each different kind of marine community. Looking at aerial maps it instantly becomes clear that the area occupied by macrocystis kelp beds is very small indeed. Additionally, looking at excellent sonar maps published by the Seafloor Mapping Lab at CSUMB, it becomes clear that the more offshore reefs in the 80-200 foot range are also a scare resource. Marshes, sloughs and lagoons are even rarer still. These are all incredibly important to the development of many species of fish and I believe they should be protected accordingly. Each compromise eliminates a unique habitat. Sometimes these distinctions may be small but ultimately may make all the difference to specialized or rare species.

Package 2 is clearly superior to most of the other packages in it's protection of the deeper and more offshore reefs; notably the Carmel Pinnacles, the deep reefs immediately north of Point Lobos and the large reef structure off of Yankee Point. In the same way that kelp beds cover only a very small part of the ocean off of our coasts, these offshore reefs are a limited and extremely important habitat. They are important habitat for many of the deeper water rockfish such as Rosy, Bocaccio, Vermillion, Yelloweye and Starrys. These reefs, being offshore and in clean water also harbor a unique and incredibly productive invertebrate ecosystem.

Further, compared to the newer Package S, Package 2 offers better protection of the nearshore kelp forest in the Cannery Row area and the Pebble Beach area of Carmel. I find it especially unfortunate that spearfishing contests would be allowed in these areas. Given that spearfishers, especially in the context of a contest, will be targeting large, productive fish I fail to see how allowing this kind of extraction can be considered consistent with a marine conservation area.

Marine reserves will only work if they protect a sufficiently large area. Even Package 2 represents a level below what I would be comfortable with but it is clearly superior to the other options. Compromise may be easier politically at this time but in the long run everyone will benefit from a healthy resource. Even now many of the groundfish species have seen their landing numbers dramatically decline over the past several decades.

Sincerely,

Clinton Bauder

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Underwater Film Producer
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